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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Merciful Father, for Your marvelous grace that enables us to live victoriously, we thank You. Thank You for strength during life's sunshine and shadows.

Lord, help us to express our gratitude by doing Your work in our world. Guide our lawmakers with Your higher wisdom, giving them the gift of reverential awe. Inspire them to surrender to Your will, replacing their fear with faith, their confusion with clarity, and their error with truth. Let love prevail over hate, justice triumph over greed, and harmony defeat discord.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Luis Santos, of Texas, to be Director of the Census for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2021. (Reappointment)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

JOHN R. LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate today has the opportunity to live up to its best traditions. We can put our democracy over any political party.

Later today, we will take the first step that could put us on the path to having an open debate about the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. I have championed and sponsored this bill to restore the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965. I have done this for years.

Today, Senators of both parties have the chance to show they are willing to do the job we were elected to do—to debate and vote on legislation. And no legislation could be more foundational to our democracy than that which protects the right to vote.

We 100 Senators all have the right to vote. Let us exercise that right and not avoid voting on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. This is such a fundamental part of our democracy. Let's set the example here, where all 100 Senators know we have the right to vote. Let's

make sure we vote and not avoid voting. I hope that we as a Senate will honor the rich bipartisan history around the Voting Rights Act in the name of our hero John Lewis, in the name of our democracy, and in the name of a foundational value that is the bedrock of our country.

Just yesterday, we announced a bipartisan compromise in the hopes of building support for the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. I am grateful to Senators MURKOWSKI and DURBIN and MANCHIN for their dedication to reaching this compromise. That bill, which we would seek to advance after proceeding to S. 4, will fully restore the Voting Rights Act, which is needed after two devastating decisions by the Supreme Court.

I have been clear that should the Senate eventually proceed to this bill, then I would welcome amendments to further strengthen and solidify this restoration of the Voting Rights Act, which, after all, has been bipartisan since the first enactment, usually passing the Senate unanimously, being signed into law by Presidents Reagan and Bush and others. But we should at least have that debate. Certainly, Senators should not avoid debating, and certainly Senators should not hide behind some procedural role so they don't have to vote one way or the other on the basic rights of Americans to vote.

So that is why we are here—to debate, vote on bills. There is simply no reason for any Senator to look at their constituents and say that this topic, that of protecting the right to vote, is just too political or too controversial—not the Voting Rights Act; not a voting rights bill that has a 56-year history of bipartisanship. No Senator should act as though they are afraid to vote one way or the other on this. Is that the message we want to convey to American voters eager to know what the Senate is doing to protect and strengthen our democracy? Ours is the

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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